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SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

Summary reports on Benin, the Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Yemen, Djibouti, Ecuador, Madagascar and Vanuatu

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

The following additional information has been received concerning the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/179 of 19 December 1989, entitled "Assistance to Democratic Yemen", and Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/65, entitled "Assistance to the Republic of Yemen". 1/

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I. UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

1. UNICEF was active in co-ordinating relief assistance with other United Nations agencies and the Ministry of Planning and the Flood Relief Co-ordination Committee, and was the central oranization for identifying aid-in-kind as soon as the floods washed over central and eastern parts of southern Yemen.

2. UNICEF decided to procure emergency food items, such as dried milk powder, biscuits, cooking oil, canned fish and other canned food, for a total value of $US 25,000, from locally available stock of the Home Trade Corporation.

3. Vaccines against measles, tetanus, polio, tuberculosis and diphtheria, which had been provided in the context of the ongoing health programme, were diverted to emergency areas in order to protect young children and women in precarious situations. The accelerated use of these vaccines was compensated for at the end of the year, when supplementary funds were granted to Democratic Yemen for its Expanded Programme of Immunization.

4. Rehabilitation of drinking-water systems affected by the flood were taken into account in UNICEF's ongoing programme to provide clean drinking-water to deprived populations.

II. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

5. From 19 March to 3 April 1989, five Governorates in Democratic Yemen were struck by heavy rains and floods. The most severely affected areas were the urban and rural areas in the vicinities of Seiyun, Tarim, Shibam, Al-Qatin and Shihir, in Hadramawt Governorate, and the town of Atag, in the Shabuwa Governorate. The amount of daily rainfall in some of the affected areas was recorded at over 180 millimetres, that is, greater than three times the annual average. The rainfall was followed by high levels of flooding. Although emergency relief efforts began almost immediately after the incidence, it was reaffirmed that restoring the country's agricultural productivity capacity and essential economic infrastructure destroyed or damaged by the flood, and reducing human deprivation and suffering through restoration of social services and shelter would require tremendous economic and social costs and that preparedness and prevention were the most cost-efficient measures.

6. On 3 April 1989, the Government of Democratic Yemen made an official request for urgent aid to ESCWA through its Ambassador in Iraq. ESCWA responded by immediately organizing a four-day mission to Aden for a senior social affairs officer to consult with the UNDP Resident Representative and the concerned government officials, in order to make a first assessment of the situation resulting from the floods and heavy rains. The representative of ESCWA arrived at Aden on 20 April 1989 and held discussions with a large number of relevant government officials and with the UNDP Resident Representative. From those discussions and on the basis of available information, a brief report was drafted and presented to the fifteenth session of ESCWA, which was convened at Baghdad from

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15 to 18 May 1989. That report, which will be further summarized below, showed that the torrential rains have been unprecedented, even compared with those of 1982, and asked that Commission resolution 107 (IX), entitled "International assistance to the flood-stricken areas of Democratic Yemen", adopted in 1982, be revitalized and that an appeal for intensified efforts from the international community be urgently made. Following these recommendations, a resolution also entitled "International assistance to the flood-stricken areas of Democratic Yemen" (resolution 176 (XV)) was adopted during the fifteenth session of ESCWA. That resolution requested the Executive Secretary of ESCWA to take a major course of action, by devising a system in the ESCWA secretariat to deal with natural disasters with a view to expanding the offer of immediate assistance to its member States whenever such disasters occurred in future. ESCWA submitted a project proposal to major donor agencies for the establishment of a unit in charge of co-ordinating various ESCWA activities in natural disaster reduction and for promoting such activities. The first assignment of the unit would be to identify all the high-risk areas of the region that are particularly prone to natural disasters such as heavy rains, earthquakes, floods, landslides, wildfires, drought and other calamities.

7. The damage identified by the government authorities and on which information was available at the time of the ESCWA report was summarized as follows:

(a) Twenty-three people were killed;

(b) Fifty-three people were injured and 80,000 made homeless; 260,000 persons were affected in one way or another;

(c) Some 4,214 dwellings were totally or partially destroyed;

(d) Some 377 public institutions (government departments, co-operatives, etc.), including 35 schools and 15 health centres and units, were destroyed;

(e) Flash-floods eroded 48,464 feddans (acres) of land, of which 17,967 feddans of farm soil were totally eroded, including 8,415 feddans of crops;

(f) Some 34,688 fruit trees, including 3,200 coffee trees, were destroyed;

(g) Four hundred irrigation pumps, 513 artesian and open wells, and 320 agricultural and other machines were destroyed;

(h) Some 1,124 km of paved and unpaved roads were destroyed;

(i) Some 5,467 head of livestock were lost and 1,028 beehives were damaged;

(j) Serious and extensive damage was caused to the Hanan and Shiban dams;

(k) Sixty per cent of the wheat and tobacco crops in Hadramawt Governorate was ruined;

(l) Large but unspecified quantities of cotton, vegetable and fruit crops were ruined.

8. After having done all within its power to provide emergency relief supplies and having harnessed all its available potential to prevent further casualties and damage, the Government contacted the UNDP Resident Representative on 25 March 1989 and called upon him officially, in his capacity as the co-ordinator of United Nations activities in Democratic Yemen, to request all United Nations agencies, including the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO), to extend immediate and urgent aid to relieve the flood victims in the country. A number of fraternal and friendly countries, as well as a number of local, regional and international organizations, immediately responded to the appeals made by the Government and UNDRO; some of them sent emergency relief supplies and other promised financial and material aid. The total value of aid sent or pledged through UNDRO by 15 April was $1,162,842. Other aid was sent directly to the Government, including material and financial aid, primarily humanitarian, in order to provide basic supplies to victims in the stricken areas.

9. It was determined that, in spite of the humanitarian aid that had been pledged, there was an urgent need to appeal to the international community to intensify efforts and initiatives to offer speedy and generous financial and material aid in order to help the country to rehabilitate and reconstruct the stricken areas and consequently to resume agricultural production and rebuild its national economy.

III. OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR

10. On 23 March 1989, following one week of exceptional torrential rains causing severe floods in central and eastern regions of the country (Hadramawt, Shabuwa and Mahra) the Government of Democratic Yemen requested UNDRO to launch an international appeal for assistance.

11. Damage figures and reconstruction needs were estimated at $72 million and are as follows:

(a) Some 4,066 houses destroyed;

(b) Some 377 public institutions destroyed (including 35 schools and 15 health centres);

(c) Some 20,000 hectares of land eroded;

(d) Four hundred irrigation pumps and 70 wheels damaged;

(e) Some 1,124 km of road destroyed;

(f) Some 5,467 head of livestock lost;

(g) Crop losses estimated at $5.8 million.

12. Following the UNDRO appeal, many Governments and relief agencies responded immediately by sending emergency aid in cash or by shipping relief supplies and construction material.

13. Donations worth $3 million were reported to UNDRO; however, that amount did not include a number of contributions in kind, the value of which had not been indicated.

14. In addition to international aid co-ordination, UNDRO arranged for the use of $750,000 in cash grants from the Fund for International Development of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the Governments of Australia, Italy and the Netherlands, and an anonymous donor ($250,000) from the United States of America for the affected people. With the last contribution UNDRO arranged two shipments of construction equipment (concrete mixers and spare parts) from the United States to Aden. The material was used in rehabilitation and reconstruction activities.

Notes

1/ On 22 May 1990, Democratic Yemen and Yemen merged to form a single State. Since that date they have been represented as one Member with the name "Yemen".